



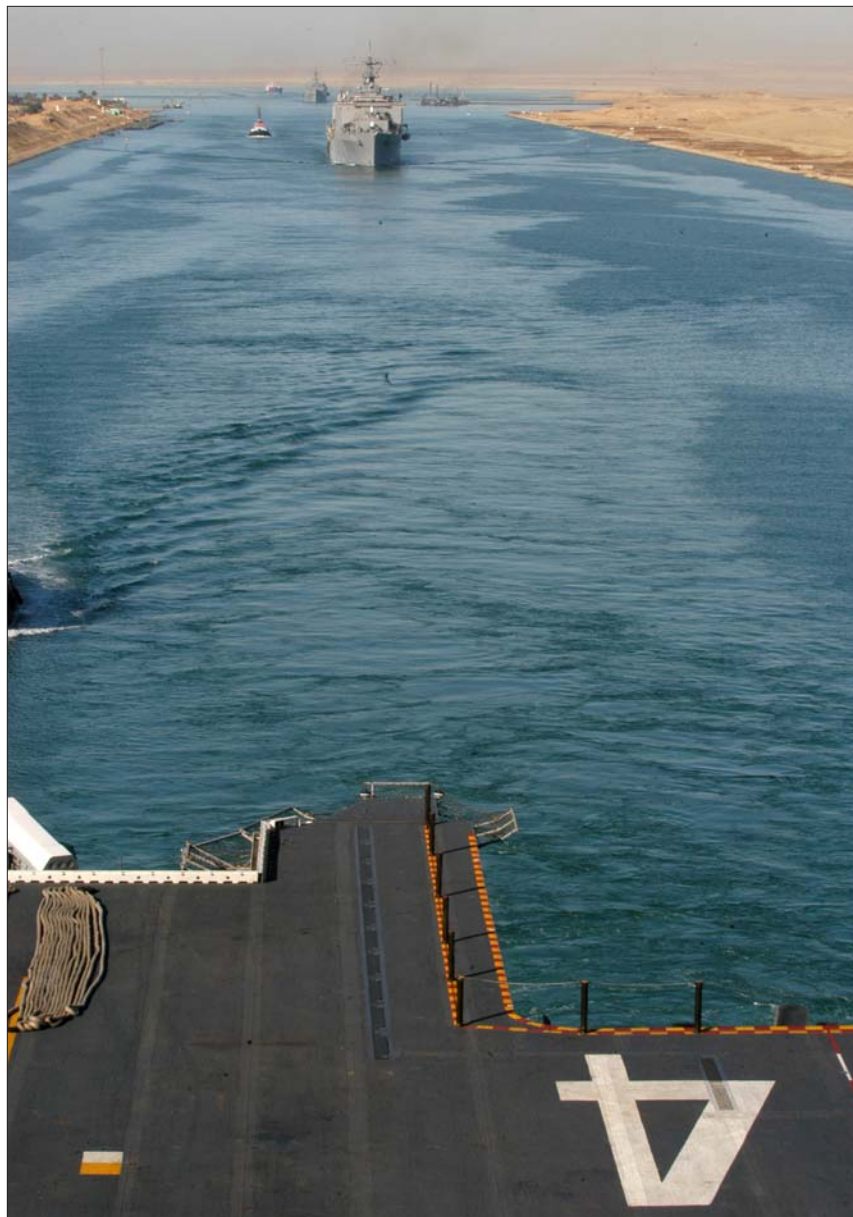
# ***Gator Times***

## **USS NASSAU (LHA 4)**

December 2, 2005

Vol. 6, No. 11

## ***One Step Closer***



*USN photo by PH3 Andrew King*

USS CARTER HALL (LSD 50) and USS AUSTIN (LPD 4) form a convoy behind USS NASSAU as it transits the Suez Canal Nov. 26, 2005. NASSAU and other members of Expeditionary Strike Group Eight transited the Suez Canal en route to support Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terrorism.

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*NASSAU's CMC speaks out on the first few weeks of deployment.*

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*See what your shipmates are doing to make sure their skills stay sharp.*

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*A 22MEU(SOC) Marine continues a tradition he started several years ago.*

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# Food for Thought as Deployment Continues

By CMDCM(SW/AW) R. Makowski

Here it is, time for another issue of the *Gator Times*.

Our Sailors and Marines find themselves a little "saltier." We have completed a crossing of the Atlantic, our first port visit in Rota, Spain, sailed across the Mediterranean, and completed the passage through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea.

This is quite remarkable, since almost one third of the crew has never been outside the United States.

For the first week and a half, many of our Sailors spent their time finding their sea legs. There were a few days when the chow lines were a little shorter, and a few of the crew members had an interesting shade of green coloring their faces. This was followed by a much



USN photo by PHAN Amanda Clayton

**GANGWAY!!!** CMDCM(SW/AW) Rick Makowski carries slices of pumpkin pie to the Mess Decks for NASSAU's Thanksgiving feast. Officers and senior enlisted Sailors and Marines showed their thanks to the junior enlisted members by serving as food service attendants during the meal.

needed break in Rota, Spain, where the crew was afforded some much deserved liberty. Once again the Blue/Green team demonstrated their professionalism, almost without exception, that they were true ambassadors of the country they proudly defend.

With our batteries recharged, we headed across the Mediterranean, making the best use of every minute by honing our skills with numerous gun shoots and weapons qualifications, or by running drills to prepare the crew for any emergency.

Only through practice do we enable our Sailors and Marines to perform so flawlessly if and when actual casualties occur. I can see the crew truly coming together, helping one another, forming that bond that true "shipmates" do.

I must admit that in my 26 years of service and seven prior deployments, I have never seen a spread quite like the Thanksgiving meal our Supply Department so professionally put on for the crew. I had crewmembers actually come up to me and say, "Master Chief, I actually forgot where I was for the 20 minutes I ate. It was just like being back

home with my family." I truly was impressed. Well done to everyone who made the meal a success!

As we approach our mission for this deployment, the anticipation of not knowing what is to come ahead and the thoughts of a holiday season away from home weigh heavily on the crews' minds. How do you not get home sick and depressed during a holiday season while deployed is a question I am frequently asked. Without hesitation I answer:

"I do miss being at home, but I also know that if we were not out here defending the rights of our country, we would not have the freedoms all Americans enjoy during the holiday season. It is our turn to stand the watch so our country can sleep at night knowing that we, the Sailors and Marines of USS NASSAU, have the watch. If you think about it, for over 200 years our nation's finest men and women have missed the holiday season, so their families can freely enjoy them."

No one likes being away at this time of the year. One way I find to get my mind off it is to completely engross

**Please see "As I See It," page 8.**

## **Gator Times** USS NASSAU (LHA 4)

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# The Best Christmas Gift

**Chaplain D. M. McElwain**

I remember as a kid the long list of toys I wanted for Christmas. I can even remember some of the ones I got: the Lionel train set; the basketball and hoop in fourth grade; the .22 caliber rifle. Most of those things that were so vitally important to my existence as a kid are not only long forgotten, but have not physically existed for years.

The reality of life is this ... possessions do not fulfill us. That's why parents joke about all the expensive toys they buy for holidays and birthdays and then their kids play with the box having more fun using their imaginations. We may be momentarily happy with a gift we receive but after we enjoy it for a while it is ultimately replaced by the next new thing.

More than the presents I received,

I remember the people who shared my holidays. The rituals involved in celebrating Christmas hold more importance than any one gift. The rituals are joined to the people.

When I was little my father read the Christmas story before anything else started. Of course, that was about 5 am Christmas morning, because I woke everyone up. Dinner was my mother's triumph. There was always a box from my grandparents, bringing them to mind, bearing homemade popcorn balls and my grandmother's buttermilk fudge.

Many of our most precious memories are founded on relationships that supported, encouraged and fulfilled us. The rituals developed back then are keys in remembering and creating meaning in our lives today.

As we celebrate our holidays apart from family this year, I encourage you

**Chaplain's  
Corner**



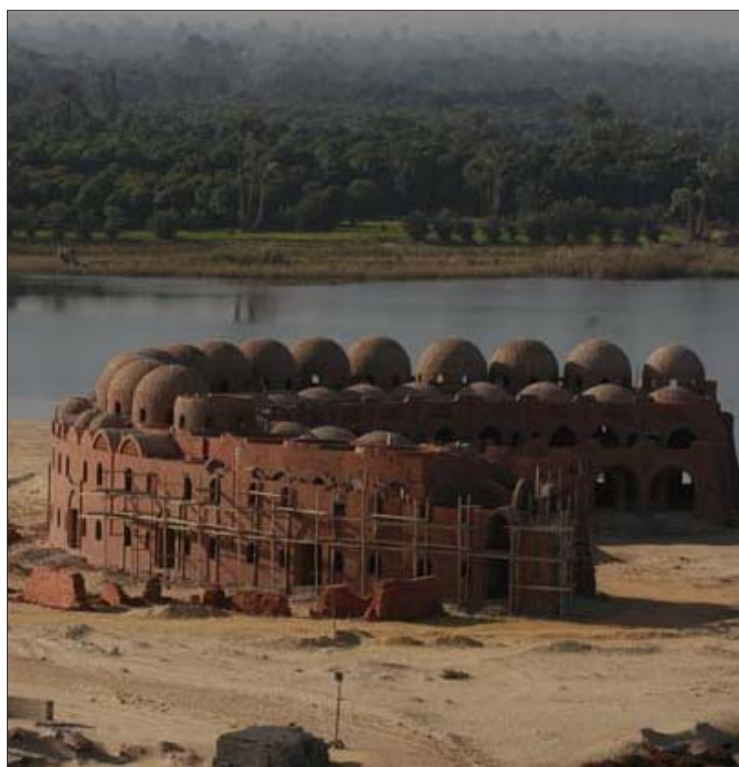
to reflect on the regular way you would celebrate. Think about the people who make your holidays times of joy and occasions of happiness. See if there are some ways to practice the rituals with which you are familiar.

Lastly, remember that holidays are really Holy Days. They are times we remember – often through ritual – how sacred life is, what that means to us as individuals, and where our lives are made better because we relate to God. Your relationship with God never ends. The best gift you can give yourself and to others is to practice your faith during these Holy Days.

Happy Chanukah and a joyous Christmas.

## NASSAU Completes Transit of Suez Canal

**RIGHT:** NASSAU begins her transit through the Suez Canal, signaling Expeditionary Strike Group Eight's entrance into the 5th Fleet Area of Responsibility. **BELOW:** Egyptian construction on the bank of the Suez Canal as seen from NASSAU's Flight Deck.



USN photos by PH1(AW/SW) Brian McFadden





# ***Practice Makes Perfect...***



USN photo by PHAN Steven Smith

**LEFT:** Airman Marcus Estrada receives a neck brace from Medical Department personnel while playing the role of a medical casualty during a simulated damage control drill. Many departmental training teams are integrated into one training scenario to determine how well the crew works together during an emergency. **BOTTOM:** Lance Cpl. Gary Okarmus of Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 1/2 Alpha stands by while his rifle barrel is inspected after a gun shoot on NASSAU's Flight Deck.



USN photo by PHAN Steven Smith



USN photo by PHAN Steven Smith

As the NASSAU Expeditionary Strike Group moves closer to hostile territory, training has intensified to ensure Sailors are fully prepared for any given situation. ABOVE: PS3 Michael Hofmiester mans a fire hose during a simulated casualty control drill. RIGHT: PC3 Curtis Crutcher communicates with another hose team member during the same drill.

***NASSAU  
Sailors and  
Marines train  
for real life  
scenarios.***



USN photo by PHAN Steven Smith



# Gator In The Spotlight

## CS3 T. M. Stone

**Navy Experience:** 3 years, 6 months

**Time Onboard:** 1 year, 8 months

**Hometown:** Chicago, Ill.

### What made you decide to join the Navy?

September 11. It hurt me to see innocent people die for no reason. That morning, I was getting ready for work and my friend called and told me to turn on the T.V. I thought I was watching an action film at first. I was really hurt and sad for the families, so I decided to give at least four years of my life to my country. I didn't know what I wanted to do but I wanted to help in some way.

### Why did you choose to become a Culinary Specialist?

I already loved to cook, but when I was a food service attendant (FSA) in Japan, the cooks were a team. They were doing two things I love – cooking and having fun doing it. I enjoyed being in that type of environment and seeing my shipmates smile when they were enjoying a good meal.

### What are the best and worst things about deployment?

The best is I have the opportunity to tell my friends and family that I'm doing something important for my country, and visiting many places that some could not even imagine going to.

The worst has to be the long hours CS's have to put in to give good customer service to our shipmates,



from 0430 to sometimes 2200, day in and day out. But its worth the smile and getting compliments from the XO and the rest of the crew. As they say, choose your rate, choose your fate.

But I love being a CS and I can't fathom doing anything else.

### Where is one place you would love to be stationed?

I would have to say Mayport or Jacksonville, Fla. The cost of living is good and you get more for your money.

### What is your favorite Navy moment?

I'm having it now, being in the "spotlight." For all the long days and nights, underways, Mongolian nights, ice cream socials, and "thank

you, that was a good meal," – it's good to hear, but to be recognized by your peers and given the chance to have my shipmates get to know me, that is definitely a favorite.

### What would you say is the most interesting thing about you?

I don't take no for an answer. I believe that, where there's a will, there's a way.

### What is your ultimate goal?

I want to become a Master Chief (Petty Officer), because I want to gain that wealth of Navy knowledge Master Chief's have. My mentor has helped me in a way that no other shipmate has. I started giving up on the Navy until I met Master Chief Miranda. I admire him and respect him a lot. He is the reason I'm going to reenlist. Otherwise after this deployment, I was going to get out of the Navy.

### Life after the Navy – what do you want to do?

I want to open a restaurant. I would probably name it Stoney's, hopefully have some good cooks and specialize in a little bit of everything.

### Since this is your spotlight, is there anything else?

I must say that much of my success in the Wardroom as watch captain is due to two junior cooks: CSSN James Frazier and CSSN Jermaine Robinson, and the hard work of my FSA's.

## Earn your warfare pin!



Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) training, nightly in the Chapel Library at 1900.



Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist (EAWS) training, nightly in the Chapel Library at 2000.



# Bravo Zulu

## CMC's Super Sailors Of The Day

18 Nov – SN David Bohannon (Deck)  
19 Nov – CSSN Steven Rose (Supply)  
20 Nov – BM2 Gregory Drerup (TRNG)  
21 Nov – ICFA Sean Deeks (C5I)  
22 Nov – MM3 Aaron Clark (ENG)  
23 Nov – AN Lawrence Talaro (AIR)  
24 Nov – IS3 Sander Matthews (OPS)  
25 Nov – ADAN Roger Cunningham  
26 Nov – PC3 John Boyd (SUP)  
27 Nov – DT2 Xavier Guy (DENTAL)  
28 Nov – FC3 Bradley Rittenour (C5I)  
29 Nov – MMFN Allen Anderson (Eng.)  
30 Nov – ABH3 Jose Vegarios (Air)  
1 Dec – AOAN Curtis Isaacs (Weps)  
2 Dec – SN Zaid Kadri (Deck)

## Frocked to

### Petty Officer First Class

MM1 Michael Bocchicchia  
SH1 Peter Matos  
IT1 Shaun McMullan  
GM1 Linda Meek  
AG1 Paul Stimson  
AD1 Lorenzo Thomas  
IT1 Taunisha Townsel  
EM1 Rickey Williams

## Frocked to

### Petty Officer Second Class

PS2 Romeo Aka  
BM2 Jonathan Borden  
IT2 Dustin Boehm  
SK2 Imareli Castilloluciano  
CTM2 Amanda Clutter  
OS2 Latoya Coleman  
DC2 Sean Connolly  
HT2 Lenton Edgy  
OS2 Ryan Fernandez  
IS2 Chris Fredericks  
MA2 Kristopher Griffin



AC2 Elyse Harvey  
MA2 Corey Herring  
SK2 Jonathan Igwebueze  
IT2 James Johnson  
IT2 Scott Lecture  
SH2 Durben Matthews  
QM2 Dane Molnar  
YN2 David Ruiz  
MM2 Jeremiah Ruley  
IT2 Kimberly Sargent  
SK2 Kelsey Sayson  
QM2 Darrell Scott  
CTR2 Matthew Stone  
AS2 Jason Torres  
IT2 Phillip Valencia  
FC2 Robert Williams

## Frocked to

### Petty Officer Third Class

DC3 Tomas Abadie  
EN3 Shad Adams  
IT3 Ricard Aguilera  
SH3 Char Agyeilarbi  
MR3 Brandon Allen  
MM3 Allen Anderson  
SH3 Argenis Batista  
MM3 Jeffrey Bealmear  
CS3 Joshua Bernardo  
IT3 Amanda Bertrand  
SK3 Rio Cunningham  
HT3 John Dossey  
MM3 Allen Forbes  
MM3 Alexander GardnerMurphy

OS3 Edward Gontz  
MM3 Lamar Henderson  
GM3 Ernest Huizar  
IT3 Amy Krochalk  
IT3 Bradley LaForce  
MR3 Russell Lane  
OS3 Timothy Largent  
GM3 Rodney Malabanan  
MM3 Joshua Mark  
MR3 Joseph Mazurek  
MM3 Troyus Minter  
IT3 Richard Mummert  
BM3 Blair Murri  
EM3 DeShawn Oliver  
HT3 Shawn Overstreet  
YN3 Christian Pardo  
DC3 Craig Parker  
AO3 Alicia Pine  
MM3 Derrick Powell  
OS3 Raymon Powell  
BM3 Jose Rivera  
OS3 Cesar Rodriguez  
IT3 Eva Rolle  
IT3 Darrell Scott  
EM3 John Sheffer  
MM3 Aaron Snyder  
MM3 Kenneth Strong  
DC3 Jacob Suckow  
GM3 Demetrius Sullivan  
AO3 Fanny Vasquez  
IT3 Stephen Webb  
OS3 Miao Xie  
MM3 We Zatocilniazy

## A Note From Home...

From time to time, the Public Affairs Office receives e-mails from family members back home responding to the e-mail they receive with the most recent issue of the Gator Times. Certain e-mails deserve to be shared with the crew, such as the one below from Mr. Scott Smith.

"We are so proud of all of you. We are SN Brian Theall's parents. His mom was in the post office mailing a box for him recently. While standing in line, a little old man said, "Thank you." She didn't respond, so he said it again. She turned to him and asked, "Are you talking to me?" He said, "Yes, thank you for your son." He saw the address on the box she was mailing to our son and saw it was a military address. Those few words made us so proud. Thank you all. Have a great holiday. God bless you all!"

# Marine Hopes to Continue Flag Tradition On NASSAU

By Cpl. Christopher S. Vega

During times of war, deployed service members often take a keepsake home with them to remind them of where they've been and what they've done.

While most keep photos, a jar of dirt, or even a souvenir they bought from the country they were in, 1st Lt. Eric Pickelsimer, a platoon commander with Golf Battery, Battalion Landing Team 1st Bn., 2nd Marines, carries with him an American flag.

Pickelsimer decided his keepsake was going to be a standard 3' x 5' American flag. He purchased the flag last year in Afghanistan and while in the field, keeps it close in a pouch on his mountain rucksack.

"I never thought I would do something like this until I met a wounded soldier in Afghanistan," said the Georgia State University graduate. "He befriended a lot of Marines while at our camp, and after returning to the States, he mailed us a Marine Corps flag that we later flew over our camp."

Keeping documentation of when and where the flag is flown, Pickelsimer has already flown the flag at Camp Blessing and Forward Operating Base



USMC photo by Cpl. Christopher S. Vega

**1st Lt. Eric Pickelsimer holds his personal American flag he has flown over every command he has served at during his deployments.**

Gardez in Afghanistan during his 2004 deployment there with the 3rd Bn., 6th Marines.

Right now he hopes to fly it aboard USS NASSAU during his current deployment with the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), and wherever the upcoming months may take him.

"I want this to show young Marines that we are patriots and our flag

still means something," he said. "We should be proud to be Americans, and this is my way of showing that I am."

The former special education teacher is the first in his family to join the Marine Corps, and plans to fly the flag on his front porch after he leaves the Corps. Later, he intends to pass the flag down to his children as an heirloom to inspire them to defend their country as he did.

**"As I See It," from page 2.**

myself in my job, get everything done

possible, so when we do return home to our families, we can spend time with

them. I have known people who read to get their mind off it, and have seen command activities to help Sailors and Marines through this difficult time of the year. Some times I just take time to pray and reflect on the great past holiday seasons I have had, when it was not my turn to stand the watch.

In closing, I would like to congratulate the more than 140 Sailors on board NASSAU and her command elements who were selected for advancement.

I would also like to thank the command support groups, our Ombudsmen, Tim and Melisa, have done a great job! Our family support group, Michelle, Angela and Melanie along with my wife Robin, thank you for making this holiday season a little easier for our families as well as the crew.

To all God Bless and have the happiest holiday season, it is an honor to serve with you!



USN photo by PHAN Amanda Clayton

**BM1(SW/AW) James Gamble enjoys a laugh with several shipmates during NASSAU's Thanksgiving feast.**